



MAINE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

23 State House Station
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

STATE OF MAINE

The State Board of Education held a regular monthly meeting on January 8, 2025, at the Burton M. Cross building in Augusta, Maine and virtually via Zoom. The following members were present: Chair Fern Desjardins; Vice Chair Paulette Bonneau; James Ford; Thomas Keller; Victoria Kornfield; Ed Morin; Phat Thai; Denham Ward; and Cedar Worster

Absent With Excuse: Wendy Ault

Others Present: Pender Makin, Commissioner, MDOE; Mallory Cook, Director of Training & Early Educator Engagement, MEA; Chris Howell, Superintendent, RSU 14; Jonathan Moody, Superintendent, RSU 54; Dolly Sullivan, Program Director, Educate Maine; Lance Whitehead, Architect, Lavallee Brensinger Architects; and Emily Cummins, Office Specialist II, State Board of Education

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Fern Desjardins called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

Emily Cummins took roll call. Chair Desjardins declared a quorum present.

VISION STATEMENT:

Read by student member, Phat Thai: The vision of the Maine State Board of Education is that all students will receive a high-quality education leading to graduation with the skills, knowledge, and principles to be prepared for future learning, careers, and life.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA: Chair Desjardins announced that the student transfer appeal under Item VII was withdrawn by the parent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION by Denham Ward, seconded by Tom Keller, and unanimously voted by those present to approve the December 11, 2024, minutes as presented. The motion was adopted.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No Public Comment.

STUDENT TRANSFER APPEALS: The Student Transfer Appeal was withdrawn by the parent.

OFFICER'S REPORTS:

Chair, Fern Desjardins

- The Student Transfers Ad Hoc Committee met on December 19, 2024, and January 7, 2025, with superintendents Jonathan Moody, Peter Thiboutot, Maria Libby, and Stephen Marquis; Eileen King, Executive Director, MSSA; and Deputy Commissioner Dan Chuhta. The ad hoc committee and superintendents drafted language to replace 20-A MRSA §5205(6) that was discussed in the morning workshop. A draft will be submitted for a bill in the legislature by January 10.
- The most recent draft of language for Policy VII Committees from Fern included feedback she received from Board members and Sarah Forster, AAG. The draft was discussed in the morning workshop and will continue on February 12.
- Orientation with the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee is scheduled for January 15, 2025, at 10:00 am. Paulette, Tori, Ed and Fern will make a presentation for the Board.
- Beth Lambert, Chief Teaching and Learning Officer, MDOE, asked Fern for a State Board rep to serve on the Life and Career Ready Standards Review Steering Committee. Board members interested in serving on the committee should contact Fern.

Vice Chair, Paulette Bonneau

- Attended the School Construction Committee meeting and the two Student Transfers Ad Hoc Committee meetings.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

School Construction Committee (Fern Desjardins):

The School Construction Committee met on December 20, 2024.

- The committee recommended the exhibit that will be taken up under New Business to grant Design and Funding Approval to RSU 14 (Windham and Raymond) for a new grades 5-8 Middle School construction project.
- They also recommended the exhibit that will be taken up under New Business for the removal of project 3, MSAD 46/AOS 94, RSU 80/MSAD 4, RSU 41/MSAD 41, RSU 82/MSAD 12, Greenville Public Schools, Tri-County Technical Center, from the Integrated, Consolidated 9-16, Educational Facility Approved Projects List for the 2017-2018 Rating Cycle.
- An update of the Governor's Commission on School Construction, which included an overview of the work that has been completed to date, the formation of three sub-committees, and the schedule of the Commission, was provided. The final report of the Commission is due April 15, 2025.
- Committee members received a MEPRI update. MEPRI is currently reviewing and analyzing the recently completed School Building Inventory data. They are under contract with the Department to complete their analysis and provide a report of the data this month.
- The next Committee meeting is scheduled for January 31 at 9:00 a.m. at the Cross Building in Room 500.

Certification and Higher Education (Thomas Keller):

The Certification and Higher Education Committee met on December 18, 2024.

- **Higher Education –**
 - Beal University Review Visit Status, with Michael Perry reporting that all parties are on the same page regarding the review.
 - The committee also discussed the listing of certifications offered by each EPP, with Michael Perry promising to send the list to the committee members and EPP colleagues.
 - The Roux Institute Program review request and a new institute for architectural graduate programs.
 - The dissolution of the Maine Higher Education Council and the tracking of pertinent legislation.
- **Certification Team Workload and Data Challenges –**
 - The number of applications processed remained the same; the workload felt more intense due to increased individual outreach per application.
 - Denham suggested breaking down the data to better understand trends, particularly in teacher certification levels.

- Discussions for the need for better data capabilities in the certification software and the need for more detailed data breakdowns, particularly in terms of initial teachers and their pathways.
- Challenges of the CHRC violation report, noting that the violations list had been reduced by eliminating private schools not under CHRC clearance requirements.
- The need for better workflow in the certification system, particularly in terms of CHRC clearance. Mallory Cook suggested geographically mapping where violations were happening to provide appropriate support.
- **Maine Apprenticeship Programs for Education –**
 - The potential of apprenticeship programs in Maine, particularly in the education sector. Apprenticeship programs can help address teacher shortages and improve retention rates.
 - The structure of apprenticeship programs, emphasizing that they are competency-based and include both on-the-job training and classroom instruction. Programs are currently being developed in various school districts and that the goal is to create a standardized K-12 certification program through apprenticeship.
 - The potential of apprenticeship programs to support new Americans and new Mainers in their career advancement.
- **TEAME report - Maine Teacher Residency and Collaboratory –**
 - Zeke Kimball, the interim Dean from the University of Maine, discussed the Teacher Educator Alliance of Maine and new developments on the UMaine campus. Zeke shared updates about the Maine Teacher Residency, which has prepared over 100 teachers, and the Rural Educator Resilience Project, a multifaceted initiative to support educators in Maine.
 - He also introduced the Collaboratory, an attempt to invert the model by addressing real-world problems in collaboration with school-based partners, emphasizing the University of Maine's commitment to solving problems that matter for Maine communities.
 - Discussion of concerns about the CHRC process, particularly from Northern Maine EPPs, and the development of a recommendation for the annual report of educator preparation programs.
 - The need to minimize the number of times different information is requested by various state, federal, and non-governmental groups.
 - The CAEP standards for educator preparation programs and proposed that the CAEP report could satisfy the state's documentation needs. CAEP is the gold standard across the nation.
- **Feedback on Chapter 115 –**
 - The need for accountability in the education system, particularly in retaining current educators and ensuring they obtain proper credentials.

- A scaffolded escalation process was proposed, including timely communication from the department, an action plan within 30 days of recognizing violations, ongoing monitoring, and penalties for noncompliance.
- Removing a barrier for educational technicians who leave the profession and return after a certain period, and the need for certified teachers in Maine's public charter schools.
- The quality of education provided through online and remote classes, suggesting a need for higher quality, local or regional supports and structures.
- Educators who faced certification issues despite having relevant degrees and experience, proposing a portfolio-type process aligned with industry standards.
- The need for accountability measures based on outputs and competency rather than inputs, proposing the use of validated assessment tools like the Teacher Candidate Assessment of Performance (TCAP) for alternative certification pathways.
- Discussions about the accreditation and certification processes in medical education and their potential application to the education sector. The distinction between the organizations responsible for accreditation and certification.
- The support for a proposed plan from RSU 9 and the importance of having teams of people assess alternative certification pathways.
- Concerns about the certification process for school counselors- two individuals had received full certification without completing an aligned degree and a school counseling degree, as specified in the rules.
- It was suggested to revisit the rules for Part 2 of Chapter 115, to ensure that only appropriately educated individuals are certified as school counselors.
- A proposed pathway process for certification was discussed, emphasizing the importance of meaningful professional development and the potential for cost neutrality.

Career and Technical Education (Edmond Morin):

The Career and Technical Education Committee did not meet in December.

Legislative Action (Paulette Bonneau):

The Legislative Action committee did not meet.

Student Voices (James Ford, Cedar Worster and Phat Thai):

The Student Voices Committee met on January 6, 2025.

- Discussion of how the Student Voices Committee could be elevated or more participatory in State Board meetings.
- James would like to do a trial run of letting the student members give their input during the voting process and hopefully that can be introduced into the next cycle.
- Phat reported that the first Student Cabinet will be meeting on January 16, 2025.

Charter Commission Representatives (Victoria Kornfield, Thomas Keller, and James Ford):

The Charter Commission has not met.

Professional Standards Board (Denham Ward):

The Professional Standards Board did not meet.

NASBE:

Executive Committee/Board of Directors (Fern Desjardins):

- The Board of Directors met on December 16, 2024. Orientation was provided in welcoming three new board members. Directors received updates on recent grant awards and contracts signed for the 2025 Annual Conference in Austin, TX, auditor services, and services to be provided by NASBE staff and members.

Government Affairs Committee (Thomas Keller):

National Association of State Boards of Education's Government Affairs Committee did not meet but updates were received by email.

- **119th Congress:** The 119th Congress began on Friday, January 3rd. House members voted to return Mike Johnson (R-LA) to his role as Speaker of the House. During his acceptance remarks, Speaker Johnson mentioned education, emphasizing the role of parents, "In America, we know that human flourishing is best achieved by adherence to time-tested truths. We could list a number of those simple truths, here's a couple: It's better to give a hand-up, not a hand-out, that innovation thrives when bureaucracy dies, and that parents — not administrators — must be in charge of their children's education."
- **Senate Education Committee Assignments:** Senate education committee assignments are being finalized, with Senator Tim Scott (SC-R), Sen. Josh Hawley (MO-R), Sen. Jim Banks (IN-R), Sen Mike Crapo (ID-R), and Sen.

Marsha Blackburn (TN-R) expected to be joining (or re-joining the panel after serving on other committees). Sen. Angela Alsobrooks (MD-D), Sen. Andy Kim (NJ-D), and Sen. Lisa Blunt Rochester (DE-D) are expected to join the minority party.

- **Secretary of Education Confirmation:** Confirmation hearing dates for Secretary of Education nominee Linda McMahon are not yet set, but this could be one of the first nomination hearings. As discussed in December, Linda McMahon has previously navigated the confirmation process when she led the Small Business Administration during the first Trump administration and was confirmed by an 81-19 bipartisan vote. Given this prior experience, a swift confirmation process for the Secretary of Education nominee is anticipated.
- **U.S. Department of Education:** As the Biden administration comes to a close, the Department released a series of reports and resources. In late December, the Department published a new report, [The Impact: Fighting for Public Education](#), and [fact sheets](#) on the role of the Department and highlighting program investments

Public Education Positions Committee (Paulette Bonneau):

The Public Education Positions Committee did not meet.

UNFINISHED (OLD) BUSINESS: No Unfinished Business.

NEW BUSINESS:

Major Capital School Construction Program; *Design and Funding Approval Consideration*; RSU 14 – New Middle School Construction Project

STATEMENT OF FACT: RSU 14 Superintendent Christopher Howell requests that the State Board of Education grant Design and Funding Approval for the new grades 5-8 Middle School to be constructed in the Town of Windham.

Windham Middle School (grades 6-8) rated 5th on the Final Priority List of the 2017-2018 Rating Cycle and was placed on the Approved Projects List at the November 4, 2020, State Board of Education meeting. The project received State Board of Education Concept Approval on September 13, 2023, and was approved by local referendum vote on November 7, 2023.

It was recommended that in the best interest of the project the construction be separated into two phases. Phase 1 Site Development Approval was approved by the State Board on May 8, 2024, and allowed extensive site work to be completed more quickly than waiting for approval of the site and building combined. This work is

currently in progress and the site will be ready for phase 2 building construction in the Spring of 2025.

The Department of Education's construction staff is currently working with the architect in finalizing the building construction documents for bidding. There have only been minor modifications to the building design through the review processes since Concept Approval. The new building has been designed to meet the Department of Education school construction standards and is in the final stages of receiving all required approvals.

Design and Funding Approval is being requested pursuant to Title 20-A M.R.S. §15905(1) and State Board of Education Rule, Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects.

Project Information:

Project: RSU 14 New Grades 5-8 Middle School Construction Project

Superintendent: Christopher Howell

Architect: Lavallee Brensinger Architects – Lance Whitehead

Schools to be closed: Windham Middle School and Jordan Small Middle School

Project Budget Information:

Total Project Cost: \$171,551,289.

Local Only (no State participation): \$39,838,444.

Approved for State/Local Debt Service Subsidy: \$131,712,845.

COMMISSIONER'S RECOMMENDATION: The Commissioner of the Department of Education recommends that the State Board of Education grant Design and Funding Approval for the new grades 5-8 Middle School construction project as presented.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On December 20, 2024 the School Construction Committee recommended that pursuant to MRS Title 20-A §15905(1) and State Board of Education Rule Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects, this exhibit be placed on the January 8, 2025 State Board meeting agenda and the State Board of Education grant Design and Funding Approval to RSU 14 for a new grades 5-8 Middle School construction project as presented.

MOTION by Ed Morin, seconded by Paulette Bonneau, and unanimously voted by those present that, pursuant to MRS Title 20-A §15905(1) and State Board of Education Rule Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects, the State Board of Education grant Design and Funding Approval to RSU 14 for a new grades 5-8 Middle School construction project as presented.

Major Capital School Construction Program – Integrated, Consolidated 9-16 Educational Facility Approved Projects List for the 2017-2018 Rating Cycle – Removal of MSAD 46/AOS 94, RSU 80/MSAD 4, RSU 41/MSAD 41, RSU 82/MSAD 12, Greenville Public Schools, Tri-County Technical Project

STATEMENT OF FACT: On August 14, 2018, the State Board of Education approved the Integrated, Consolidated 9-16 Educational Facility Final Priority List recommended by the Commissioner of the Department of Education. On August 11, 2020, project number 3, MSAD 46/AOS 94, RSU 80/MSAD 4, RSU 41/MSAD 41, RSU 82/MSAD 12, Greenville Public Schools, Tri-County Technical Center, was added to the Approved Projects List, which formally initiated the planning process for the project.

The project was approved without an assigned calendar year to obtain Concept Approval. The approved exhibit used in moving the project forward on the Approved Projects List included language or waiver provisions that allowed the project to move forward without an assigned date. This was intended to allow some additional time in initiating the project and required the Department to provide timelines to the State Board in the future.

Funding for the early project costs created challenges resulting in delays in moving the project forward. Leadership for the project sought financial assistance from the Department of Education and private entities to at least partially cover initial costs to get to Site Approval. By the time the legislature passed L.D. 2214, Part AA, Section AA-1, stating that “the Commissioner of Education may provide a grant opportunity of up to \$400,000 for a regional high school construction project involving School Administrative District 4 in Guilford, School Administrative District 41 in Milo and School Administrative District 46 in Dexter,” the project had lost its momentum.

On October 9, 2024, pursuant to State Board of Education Rule, Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects, Section 6.2.F(1), the State Board of Education adopted a motion to approve 2025 as the assigned calendar year for the project identified in this exhibit to obtain Concept Approval. Failure to obtain Concept Approval in 2025 would result in removal from the Approved Projects List unless a waiver was obtained from the State Board at least 30 days prior to December 31, 2025.

On December 20, 2024, the School Construction Committee of the State Board of Education reviewed the December 5, 2024 correspondence from Kevin Jordan, Superintendent of Schools in MSAD 46/AOS 94, to Fern Desjardins, Chair of the State Board, informing her that “After multiple delays regarding project approval and funding for early project costs the four area school boards involved in this project have

made the very difficult decision to end the pursuit for a regional grades 9-16 school in this configuration. The School Boards of SAD #41 and RSU #64 were not willing to upfront early project funds to receive a matching amount from MDOE in pursuit of the next steps in the process.”

The Committee then voted unanimously to remove the project from the Integrated, Consolidated 9-16 Approved Projects List.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On December 20, 2024, the School Construction Committee recommended that this exhibit be placed on the January 8, 2025 State Board meeting agenda and that the State Board approve the removal of project 3, MSAD 46/AOS 94, RSU 80/MSAD 4, RSU 41/MSAD 41, RSU 82/MSAD 12, Greenville Public Schools, Tri-County Technical Center, from the Integrated, Consolidated 9-16, Educational Facility Approved Projects List for the 2017-2018 Rating Cycle.

MOTION by Paulette Bonneau, seconded by Ed Morin, and unanimously voted by those present that, pursuant to 20-A MRS §15905(1) and State Board of Education Rule Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects, the State Board approve the removal of project 3, MSAD 46/AOS 94, RSU 80/MSAD 4, RSU 41/MSAD 41, RSU 82/MSAD 12, Greenville Public Schools, Tri-County Technical Center, from the Integrated, Consolidated 9-16, Educational Facility Approved Projects List for the 2017-2018 Rating Cycle.

Commissioner’s Recommended Funding Level for FY 2025-2026

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to the provisions of 20-A M.R.S.A., Section 15689-C, the Commissioner, with the approval of the State Board of Education, shall certify to the Governor and the Bureau of the Budget recommended funding levels for the total cost of funding public education from kindergarten to grade twelve. The funding levels recommended herein were developed based on proposed amendments to the Essential Programs and Service Funding Act, 20-A M.R.S.A. Chapter 606-B.

COMMISSIONER’S RECOMMENDATION: I recommend that the State Board of Education approve the following motion:

To approve the certified funding level for FY 2025-2026 for the total cost of funding public education from kindergarten to grade twelve (including total operating allocation, total debt service allocation, total adjustments, total targeted education funds, total enhancing student performance and opportunity costs) at \$2,734,932,489 a local contribution amount of \$1,230,719,620 and a state contribution amount of \$1,504,212,869 to be distributed as General Purpose Aid for Local Schools. These

amounts shall be distributed per the parameters of the Essential Programs & Services Funding Act, 20-A M.R.S.A. Chapter 606-B, as amended.

MOTION by Tori Kornfield, seconded by Denham Ward, and voted six in favor with one abstention (Tom Keller) to approve the certified funding level for FY 2025-2026 for the total cost of funding public education from kindergarten to grade twelve (including total operating allocation, total debt service allocation, total adjustments, total targeted education funds, total enhancing student performance and opportunity costs) at \$2,734,932,489 a local contribution amount of \$1,230,719,620 and a state contribution amount of \$1,504,212,869 to be distributed as General Purpose Aid for Local Schools. These amounts shall be distributed per the parameters of the Essential Programs & Services Funding Act, 20-A M.R.S.A. Chapter 606-B, as amended.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Please submit expense account vouchers to Emily Cummins by the 15th day following the month of the expenses incurred.
- The next regular State Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 1:00 PM at the Burton M. Cross Building in Augusta, and virtually via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 3:13 PM.

Emily Cummins, Office Specialist II
Maine State Board of Education